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Bahraini opposition figures stripped of nationality in ‘frightening’ development

The Bahraini authorities today stripped 31 opposition figures of their Bahraini nationality in a move described by Amnesty International as “frightening and chilling”.

A Ministry of Interior statement indicated that the group, including politicians, activists and religious figures, had their nationality revoked because they had caused “damage to state security”.

The ruling means that those members of the group who only held Bahraini nationality are now stateless.

“The authorities have provided the vaguest of reasons for the deprivation of nationality, which appears to have been taken on the basis of the victims’ political views,” said Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“Most worryingly, the authorities are making some in the group stateless. This, as well as any arbitrary deprivation of nationality, is prohibited under international law.

“We urgently call on the Bahraini authorities to rescind this frightening and chilling decision.”

The Ministry of Interior statement referred to Bahrain’s Citizenship Law, which “permits the revocation of nationality” by order of the King if a citizen “causes damage to state security”.

Among the 31 people sentenced are Jawad and Jalal Fairouz, who were previously arrested for allegedly participating in anti-government protests in 2011, and Ali Hassan Mshaima - the son of opposition activist and prisoner of conscience Hassan Mshaima.